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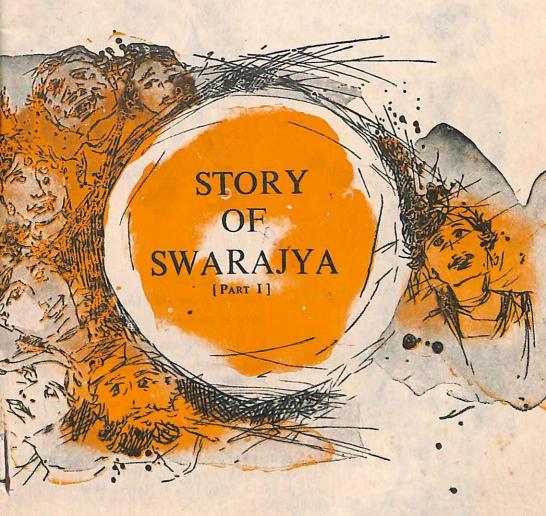
Illustrations :

S. BHATTACHARYA



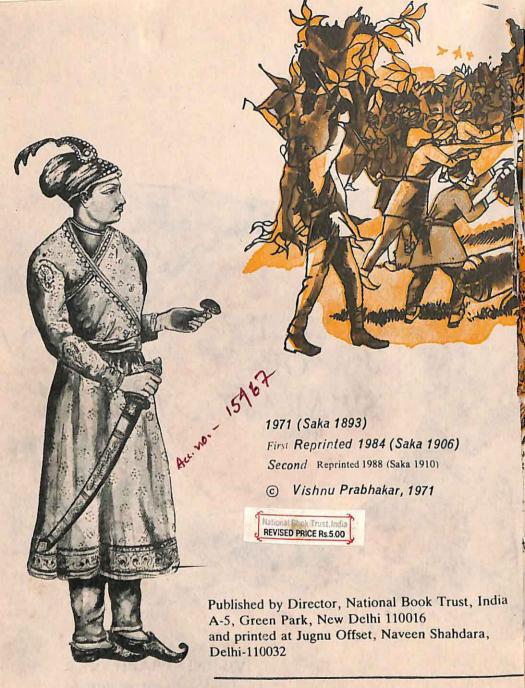
National Book Trust, India

New Delhi



VISHNU PRABHAKAR

Translated into English by
J. P. UNIYAL

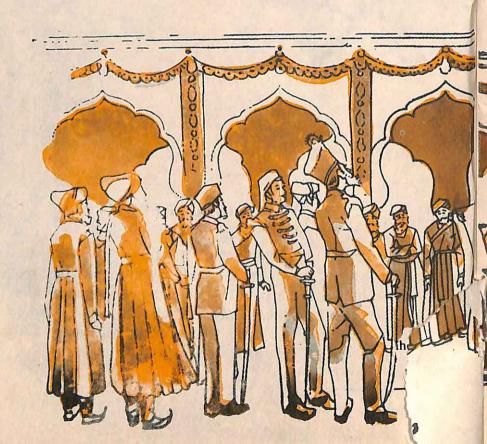




STORY OF INDIA'S FREEDOM

The British originally came to India to trade, but they stayed on to rule. Bit by bit they occupied the whole of the country, annexing one province after another. They held sway for almost two hundred years, during which we fought many battles and tried various ways to win back our freedom. The beginning of British rule is conventionally dated from the Battle of Plassey in 1757, in which the British defeated Siraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal. Although this was more a skirmish than a battle, it had important results It laid the foundation of the British Empire in India.

In the early days the British approached the Mughal court as courtiers, carrying gifts and paying tribute, but their attitude gradually changed. The following incident occurred when Shah Alam was on the throne of Delhi and Lord Wellesley was the



Governor of the provinces held by the East India Company.

One day an emissary of Wellesley arrived at the Mughal court. Bowing low, the *Vazir* said, "Your Majesty, Lord Wellesley has a proposition to lay before you for your consideration."

"What is this proposition?" demanded the Emperor.

The Vazir turned pale. The words stuck in his throat.



"What is the matter? Speak up!" commanded the Emperor.

Then hesitantly, summoning up his courage, the Vazir answered: "Your Majesty will pardon effrontery. Lord Wellesley has suggested that you and your court should shift from Delhi to Monghyr Fort."

The Emperor's face flushed with anger. He thundered, "What did you say? Leave Delhi! Live in Monghyr! The Governor wants me to vacate the Imperial seat? He wants to usurp my power! He knows, of course, that he who rules Delhi rules India. I may be old, but Tamerlane's blood flows in my veins! I will not leave Delhi. This is a gross insult. I refuse to entertain the proposal."

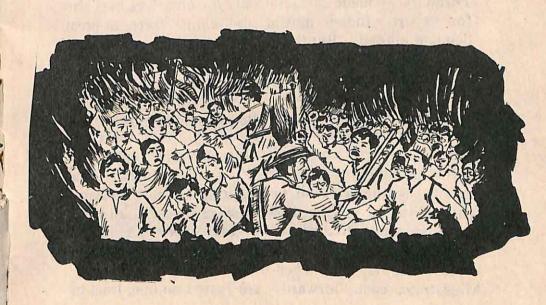
The proposal was withdrawn. But within a short time the Emperor's position became insecure. His writ did not run beyond the Red Fort where he and his court became virtual prisoners. Gradually the British took over not only the Mughal Empire but also several other provinces such as Oudh, Satara, Panna, Jhansi, Nagpur and Sambalpur.

The East India Company now governed large areas of India and, under the pretext of trade, filled its coffers. The ruling houses were unhappy as their power dwindled. The new land tenure system introduced by the British caused rural unrest. Missionary activity The discontent which had been simmering buy and the spread of Western education were deeply resented by the educated.

into flames in 1857. Several rajas and nawabs supported by the army rose to put an end to British domination. This was India's first battle for freedom and is popularly known as the Sepoy Mutiny.

Unfortunately we did not succeed. But that is hardly surprising. We were not united. We had no national spirit. Our ranks were split by distrust and dissension. A good many Indians actively supported the British. Besides, the British were well armed and we were not.

The mutiny had taken the British completely by surprise. They had been unaware of the growing discontent in the country. Though they treated the mutineers harshly—prisoners were bayoneted and then



burnt alive—they tried to mitigate the discontent by promising not to interfere in the religious practices of the people. They said they would encourage industry and thus promote the welfare of the common man.

But this was profession rather than practice. Important jobs were still reserved for the British. Only the British could carry arms. Moreover, the British continued to promote discord amongst the Indian people, turning brother against brother, Hindu against Muslim.

They levied heavy duties on Indian goods and flooded our markets with British goods. This resulted in large-scale unemployment, suffering and poverty. Formerly we made cloth not only for ourselves but also for export. Indian muslin and chintz were in great demand abroad. But the British took our raw cotton, turned it into cloth and resold it to us at many times the original price. For every five crore rupees they gave us, they took away fifty-five crore rupees.

In Bengal and Bihar, indigo plantations were run by foreigners. They were known to treat the cultivators harshly. One day, in anger, a white planter tied a burning torch to the trunk of an elephant. The elephant ran amuck and burnt down an entire village. The cultivators protested to the magistrate who ordered the police officer to arrest the white planter. The Sahib, however, pulled out a revolver. The police officer # r stood back, helpless. Then Bankim Chandra, a Deput Magistrate, came forward. He feared no one, least

all a white man's gun. He arrested the Englishman. Though he arrested him, he could not try him as the offender was English and as such could not be tried by an Indian magistrate. But Bankim Chandra never admitted defeat. He filed the case in a higher court and appeared as a witness.



SEEDS OF AWAKENING

Gradually the Indians were aroused. How could a mere handful of Englishmen successfully dominate millions of Indians? Why should a small country like England control a sub-continent as vast as India?

The first stirrings of political consciousness took root in Bengal, for it was here that the British first established themselves. Western education too was first introduced here. Faced with the challenge of the West, Indians began to re-examine their age-old customs and institutions. A great era of reform began which became the spiritual background for later political action.

The foremost among the reformers was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was critical of the flaws that had crept into our rituals and customs. He founded the Brahmo Samaj, an organization in which he tried to combine Liberal Western ideas with the philosophy of andia the Hindu scriptures. He dissuaded the people from idol-worship and propagated the idea of one God. Or dara, opposed such social evils as sati, polygamy and inful



RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

cide. He wanted to raise the status of women and was a great advocate of female education. He

demanded better jobs for Indians, reduction in land revenue and special privileges for the farmer. No wonder that Raja Ram Mohan Roy is called the father of India's awakening.

This awareness soon spread to other parts of India. The country was deluged by a wave of educational and social reform. Reformers came forward to provide a lead in establishing new social institutions. In 1867 Keshub Chandra Sen founded the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay. The Samaj propagated belief in one God, condemned idol-worship, child-marriages and caste. It supported women's education, remarriage of widows and the abolition of untouchability. The Samaj became very influential in Maharashtra.

Eight years later, in 1875, Swami Dayanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj in North India. "The Vedas are the oldest scriptures," said Swami Dayanand. "It is only by following their teachings that we can progress." Like the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Samaj too was against idol-worship, child-marriage and caste. Promulgating Hindi as the national language, the Arya Samaj started a number of educational institutions known as gurukuls. Swami Dayanand was the first to proclaim that India belonged to Indians and sovereignty must rest with the peasants. "Self-rule," he declared, "was the best rule."

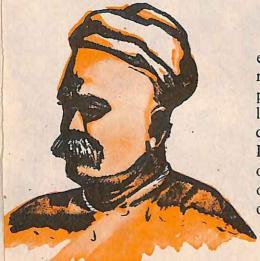
In Bengal, Swami Vivekanand, a disciple of Swami Ramakrishna, gave a further impetus to the reform movement. Swami Vivekanand was convinced of the

value and worth of Hinduism and believed that the ancient culture of India contained within it the seeds of progress. He declared, "India must regain her past glory-this is my dream. It is my earnest wish that this should become your dream too. We will not rest till this dream is fulfilled."



SWAMI DAYANAND

These movements of education and reform infused new life and hope into the people. Like beams of sunlight they pierced the fog of despair and lit the path of Independence. The leaders of these movements were no other than the forerunners of our march towards freedom.



MAHADEV GOVIND RANADE

The confidence of the British had been profoundly shaken by the Revolt of 1857. They realised that the days of passive acceptance of British domination were numbered; Indians now wished to be free. But India was a gold mine for the British. How could they leave her?

The new national awareness had a profound impact on our arts and literature too. Poets and writers took up the theme of freedom and spread it far and wide. Their writings infused enthusiasm in the masses. The well-known Hindi writer Bharatendu Harishchandra,



who often made the British the butt of his pungent humour, directed his attack chiefly against the prevalent social evils. He advocated the spread of education, wrote patriotic songs and urged the people to pledge to use *swadeshi* goods only. "Fellow countrymen," he said, "let us unite and face the British. Let us protect our own wealth."

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya wrote the famous freedom poem "Vande Mataram" in his novel Anand Math. The poem glorifies the motherland and the singer pledges his love to her: "Mother, I bow to thee...





Mother of might, Mother free..."

This song became very popular in our national movement. With this song on their lips, wave after wave of freedom fighters, defiant and daring and waving the tricolour, defied the *lathis* and bayonets of the British police, in one campaign after another.

The ruthlessness with which the British immediately crushed the slightest signs of opposition increased the bitterness against their rule.

There was a sect of Sikhs known as the Namdharis or Kukas who had at one time been soldiers in the



army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. On leaving the army they devoted their attention to religion, but still retained the martial way of life. Side by side with religion, they were devoted to the cause of the country's freedom. In those days their chief was Guru Ram Singh, a great patriot. He only used swadeshi goods and had his own postal system. Under his leadership, the Namdharis boycotted the British educational institutions, courts, railways, posts and telegraphs. They were determined to see the end of British rule in India.

In the circumstances, it was only to be expected

that the British should restrict their activities. After some years, however, these restrictions were lifted but the British kept a close watch to see that the movement did not flourish. They only awaited an opportunity to crush it.

The State of Malerkotla had a Muslim ruler who was a puppet of the British. The British instigated him against the Kukas. In January 1872 when a party of Kukas was on its way to Amritsar to take a holy dip on the occasion of Magh Mela, the people of Malerkotla harassed them. For a time the pilgrims remained passive but when the provocation became unbearable they retaliated. In a furious charge the Sikhs almost reached the palace gates.

Guru Ram Singh did his best to pacify the Kukas. But things had passed beyond his control. A section of the Kukas refused to heed him. This was what the British had been waiting for. The British Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, taking a contingent of armed men, rushed to the scene and attacked the Kukas. The latter fought bravely but were powerless against a vastly superior force. Many were killed, 68 were captured. Of these 50 were immediately blown up by a cannon. Some were hanged. Amongst those ordered to be blown up was a 13-year-old boy. The Deputy Commissioner's wife was moved by the sight of the young boy. She pleaded with her husband, "He is a mere child. He was misled. Pardon him."

"If he disowns Ram Singh," replied her husband, "I will let him go."

He summoned the boy and said, "Young fellow, the Mem Sahib is feeling sorry for you. If you declare that you are not a follower of that rascal Ram Singh, your life will be spared."

Hearing his guru thus abused, the boy lost his temper. He broke his bonds, ran towards the Deputy Commissioner, and pulling his beard, screamed, "How dare you insult my guru!"

The Deputy Commissioner was beside himself with rage. The boy held firm and would not let go. He ordered his soldiers, "Cut off this impertinent boy's hands."

The boy's hands were cut off. Then he was tied to the mouth of a cannon and blown up.

Chroniclers have mentioned this episode but the identity of the young boy still remains a mystery. The rising was ruthlessly crushed. Guru Ram Singh was arrested and sent to prison in Burma where he died.

Before the British arrived on the political scene, India was divided into many kingdoms, big and small, which were always squabbling. To strengthen their hold, the British did away with all these little kingdoms. Their slogan was a unified country, a unified administration, a unified legal system. The measures they adopted to achieve this end met with stiff opposition. But they proved to be a blessing in disguise. They resulted in unifying our countrymen. People gradually began to realise that their strength lay in unity and not in discord.

The introduction of railways, telegraphs and a

cheap and uniform postal service facilitated communication. News travelled fast, the movement of people and goods was easier. Trade and commerce also greatly benefited. Printing-presses were set up and newspapers started.

The role of the Press in our national movement was considerable. A large number of newspapers and journals were brought out and they did a great deal to educate public opinion and foster patriotism. The editors were well-known scholars and public figures and the newspapers became a mouthpiece of the growing nationalist movement. They were a constant source of irritation to the Government. Accordingly in 1874 the Vernacular Press Act was passed which banned the publication of all newspapers except those issued in English. Several newspapers were forced to fold up. This caused great agitation in the country.

Opposition against the British was growing steadily, but without unity and organization it could only be ineffective. Under the prevalent conditions, however, it was difficult to form political organizations. Secret organizations did exist under some guise or other, but



their existence was precarious and they did not last long.

Then in 1876 the Indian Association was formed in Bengal. Its aim was to focus attention on Indian problems and Surendranath Banerjee was its moving spirit. He toured the country to propagate its ideals and spoke against the repressive laws that the British had imposed upon the country.

Repressive laws irritant to the people such as the Vernacular Press Act were for the most part enacted during the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton. His successor Lord Ripon, however, was a Liberal who, four years later, revoked this Press Act. In 1883 he introduced the Ilbert Bill which empowered Indian judges and magistrates to try Europeans. The British who naturally were not happy with this measure whipped up a great agitation against the Bill. Some of them even conspired forcibly to ship Lord Ripon home to England. The Bill had to be watered down. It was only conceded that when a European was brought to trial before a district magistrate or a sessions judge, he could claim to be tried by a jury one-half of which was to be European. This modification of the Ilbert



Bill further embittered the people. It was now more than obvious that the British wanted one set of laws for themselves and another for those over whom they ruled.

In 1883 a political conference was held in Bengal. Surendranath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose, two famous leaders from Bengal, were among the delegates. Surendranath Banerjee had just criticized a British judge in his paper, the Bengalee. He was arrested and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. A large protest procession marched to the court. Ashutosh Mukherjee and Chittaranjan Das, both destined to be great leaders, were among the protesters. Never before had there been such a united demonstration of anger, so much inter-provincial fraternity and such accord. When Surendranath was released from jail, he received a hero's welcome. He had been greatly influenced by Garibaldi and Mazzini-famous Italian freedom fighters. Wherever he went, at the end of his speech, he invariably asked his audience, "Who among you will be India's Garibaldi and Mazzini?"

With one voice the audience would answer, "We".

The ground-work for the movement for India's freedom was thus well prepared.



BIRTH OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

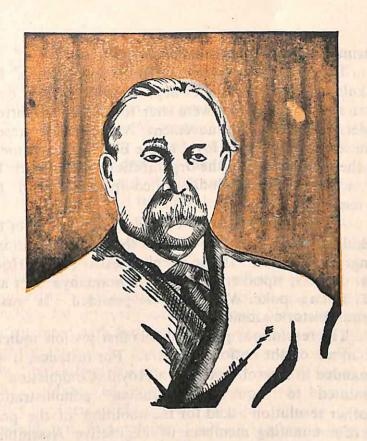
Discontent among the populace was steadily increasing. On the one hand, the British had destroyed India's indigenous industries, thus leading to widespread unemployment and poverty. On the other hand, the British Government was enacting laws which irritated the educated classes and made them hostile to British rule. Behind the scenes, in all four corners, discontent was simmering. There were some who openly advocated armed revolution. Well informed observers felt that open rebellion could flare up at any time.

The British began to realise that a way should be found to voice public grievances. Important British officials conceded the necessity for a platform from which at least the educated classes could express their discontent. They thought that dissatisfaction would be mitigated if it was given the outlet of discussion and open revolution would thereby be prevented.

A few Englishmen, however, had genuine sympathy for India and did not support the repressive

policies of the Government. One such Englishman was A.O. Hume. Hume was a man of Liberal outlook and had always had differences of opinion with the Government. He was the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, but he resigned. On March 1, 1883 Hume wrote a letter to the graduates of Calcutta University in which he called for "fifty men of unselfishness, moral courage, self-control and active spirit of national service to come forward". But he also sounded a note of warning: "If even a few intelligent and educated people cannot rise above their personal interests and work for the good of their country, then the treatment that the Indians are receiving is their just desert. If even a select few cannot unite to work for independence, we, the friends of India, will have to admit that we are wrong. India truly neither desires nor deserves any better government than she enjoys. Only, if this is so, let us hear no more factious, peevish complaints..."

Hume discussed the matter with the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, who suggested the idea of a national organization and further advised that its president should not be the Governor but a non-official. Hume then placed this scheme before Indian statesmen who readily agreed to implement it. They had no idea that it was really Lord Dufferin who had initiated it. For, the purpose of the organization was not to secure freedom for India; it was rather to safeguard British rule by providing a kind of safety-valve, a harmless outlet, for national discontent.



A. O. HUME

It was decided to invite delegates from all over the country during Christmas to Poona for a conference. But just then there was an outbreak of cholera in the city. So the first session had to be held at Bombay. Never in his wildest dreams had Lord Dufferin imagined that the organization he was creating would one day be

instrumental in ending British rule in India.

The conference was held in the premises of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College. Many of the delegates at this conference were later to become important leaders of the freedom movement. Among those present were some who were loyal to the British Government, for the avowed aim of the organization was to work for the advancement of India in co-operation with the Government.

At noon on December 28, 1885 in a hall of the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, the Indian National Congress was born. In the opening session, A.O. Hume was the first speaker. Then S. Subramanya Iyer and K.T. Telang spoke. W.C. Banerjee presided. It was a solemn, historic moment.

The resolutions passed at this first session indicate the mind of the national leaders. For instance, it was demanded in a resolution that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into Indian administration. Another resolution asked for the abolition of the practice of nominating members to Legislative Assemblies. By yet another resolution, it was demanded that examinations for the Indian Civil Service be held in India as well as in England. A curtailment of the expenditure on the army was also demanded. The session ended with shouts of "Long Live the Queen!"

The Congress network soon spread all over the country. It embraced within its fold people from different communities, provinces, religions, the rich, the

poor, workers, peasants, men, women, villagers and town-dwellers. It soon emerged as a great organization, championing all national causes.

But this evolution was gradual. For 20 years the Congress only used legal means; revolution was unthinkable. Faith in British justice was implicit. Pherozeshah Mehta declared that he had not a shadow of doubt that, in the end, British statesmen would heed India's demands. And the President of the 1896 session of the Congress went so far as to assert that there was no braver or more honest race under the sun than the British!

The Congress did sympathise with the people and their suffering but it swore allegiance to those who were responsible for this very suffering. Its leaders were not well acquainted with Indian conditions. They were not sufficiently moved by the spirit of service and sacrifice and their patriotism was conditioned by loyalty to the British. Many of them were awarded honours and titles for their services to the Empire. Due to this, they could not firmly demand self-rule before the year 1906. They only concerned themselves with demands for concessions and redressal of minor grievances.

But a new chapter in India's history had begun. People had found the courage, and secured the right, to oppose foreign rule.



EARLY CONGRESS LEADERS

Till 1905 the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of men who swore loyalty to the British and who on that consideration sought higher positions for Indians. Nevertheless they were not men to be silenced with minor concessions. They were sincere patriots and many of them later openly opposed the British.

These leaders were not all Indians, some were English. Prominent among the latter were A.O. Hume, Sir William Wedderburn and Sir Henry Cotton. Mention has already been made of Hume, the father of the Indian National Congress. Even prior to his involvement with the Indian National Congress whose General Secretary he remained for many years, he had worked for the welfare of India.

Sir William Wedderburn was twice President of the Congress: first of the Bombay session in 1889 and then again 21 years later of the Allahabad session in 1910. He continued to be a supporter of the Indian national cause till his death. Sir Henry Cotton was elected President of the Bombay session in 1904. He was the first man to conceive the idea of a united India.

Among Indian leaders, Dadabhai Naoroji was the foremost. He is considered the grand old man of India's renaissance. He was born in a Parsi family of Bombay on September 4, 1829. Having lost his father in his childhood, he was brought up by his mother. For some time he worked as a teacher, then he took to business. He was for a while the Dewan of Baroda State, but due to differences with a British official, he resigned his post.

He founded some 30 institutions and brought out several newspapers. He was thrice President of the Congress—in 1886, 1893 and 1906—and was the first Indian to be elected a member of the House of Commons. While in England he pleaded forcefully for a responsible Government for India. Though he had been belittled by Lord Salisbury because he was coloured, his speech concerning the poverty and excessive taxation in India made a strong impact on the British Parliament. When he became President of the Congress for the last time, he raised the popular slogans, swadeshi and swarajya. Speaking of Dadabhai, Gokhale said, "If godliness be possible in man, Dadabhai has it." Dadabhai died on June 30, 1917.

Surendranath Banerjee was born of a respected family of Bengal on November 10, 1848. He joined the Indian Civil Service, a coveted position, but was dismis-



S. N. BANERJEE

sed on a minor pretext. This influenced his subsequent career. He spread his political views through his lectures and writings. He toured the country addressing large assemblies on the need for national solidarity and the right of Indians to a larger share in the administration of their country. He was a great orator and was twice elected President of the Congress. During the

stir that followed the Partition of Bengal in 1905, he organised the first movement for direct political action by boycotting British goods and calling on Indians to buy Indian-made goods.

But Surendranath believed in combining service to the country with unflinching loyalty to the Empire. He often said that British culture was the greatest in the world and that British rule was a great blessing for India. Soon political events moved out of his control and this one-time fire-brand was considered in later years to be too pro-British by his countrymen. In 1921 he was nominated to the Governor's Council in Bengal. A knighthood was also conferred on him. He had by now severed all connection with the Congress.

Another great leader was Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He was born in a village in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Having lost his father at an early age, he spent his childhood in want. He had often only one meal a day and studied by the light of street lamps. But he was intelligent and hard-working and later became a teacher in an English school in Poona. This school later came to be known as Fergusson College and Gokhale became its Principal. He only accepted a token salary of Rs. 75 per month.

At an early age he came into contact with Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade. Ranade was greatly impressed by Gokhale's ability and appointed him Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha, a political organization of Bombay. When he was 33, Gokhale was elected a member of the



GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

Bombay Legislative Assembly. Soon afterwards he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, then known as the Imperial Legislative Assembly.

He joined the Congress in 1889 at the same time as Tilak. He opposed the Salt Tax and explained that a basketful of salt which cost one pice was sold to the consumer for five annas. When Mahatma Gandhi was

fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa, Gokhale visited that country and rendered valuable assistance to Gandhiji. Gokhale's most important contribution was the founding of the Servants of India Society. This consisted of a body of unselfish patriots who were pledged to keep the minimum for the barest necessities and gave away the rest of their income in charity. The Society did a great deal of active social work specially in areas where flood or famine relief had to be organised. Gokhale had an attractive and magnetic personality. Gandhiji considered him his political guru. According to Gandhiji, Gokhale had the gentleness of a lamb, the courage of a lion and was compassionate to a fault.

In the first session of the Congress the first person to speak after Hume was S. Subramanya Iyer. He strongly opposed censorship of the Press and sought a solution to the problem of recurring famines in the country. He also demanded a full and impartial inquiry into the financial condition of the country. His vision was as broad as his knowledge was profound. He was imprisoned because of his writings and was released only when he was severely ill.



SECOND PHASE OF INDIAN AWAKENING

So far national leaders had only urged constitutional methods. But gradually they realised that the basic problems of the country could not be solved by these means. More drastic measures were needed. A new kind of movement would have to be initiated. Nothing was to be gained from begging. We could obtain our freedom only if we really earned it. And we would only earn it, if we struggled for it.

Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first to realise this fact. He was not only one of India's foremost freedom fighters but was also renowned for his profound knowledge of ancient Indian culture. He started a school for imparting inexpensive education to the masses. Tilak was also the first Congress leader to suggest that Hindi should be the national language of India. He inspired the youth by giving them the ideal of selfless service to their count"y. He made the Congress question their blind faith in British rule and changed their attitude from support to defiance. In his



LOKAMANYA TILAK

personality were combined the qualities of a thinker and a fighter. He foresaw that unless the masses were drawn into the struggle for freedom, nothing could be achieved.

To this end he revived two old festivals—Ganapati Puja and Shivaji Utsava—which had been greatly neglected. The slokas sung reflect the spirit of the festivals. For example, the gist of a Ganapati hymn is: "Are you not ashamed to live in slavery? Far better that you should be dead! You call your country Hindustan! Why then do the British rule here?"

And a Shivaji Utsava hymn runs:

"Singing of Shivaji's valour will not get you your freedom. If you seek freedom, you will have to take up your shield and sword."

These ideas were constantly fed to the people. At the end of the festival, there were shouts of acclamation for Queen Victoria to allay any suspicion that revolution was being fermented.

There was acute famine in the country at this time. Tilak launched an agitation demanding exemption of land revenue. But the Government, busy with the preparations for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, was unresponsive.

Then suddenly there was an outbreak of the plague in Bombay. A committee was formed to deal with the situation. The aim of the Committee was to help the distressed but with little consideration for the sufferers, they forcibly removed the plague-stricken and herded them into a camp. They may have meant well, but their high-handed manner created resentment. People grew afraid of the camps and refused to report cases of illness. The Committee then became more vigilant.

House-to-house interrogation and searches became a routine. So harsh were the methods adopted by the Committee that people began to wonder if the plague was not the lesser of the two evils. The plague after all afflicted only the victim; the Committee, on the other hand, was an infliction on the whole family, sometimes even uprooting the entire locality.

Lokamanya Tilak never supported violence. At the same time he could not tolerate injustice in silence. In his articles in the Kesari, he angrily criticised the Government for its callousness and high-handed

methods.

While the atmosphere was poisoned by the tyranny of the Plague Commissioner, Mr. Rand, the British were celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. On . June 22, 1897 in Poona the festivities continued till late in the night. At the end of the festivities, Rand was returning home when someone suddenly emerged from behind a bush and shot him. He died in hospital two days later. The incident created a sensation. The British rulers were mad with rage. A collective fine of one and a half lakhs of rupees was imposed upon the city. A reward was announced for capturing the assassin. Ultimately, two people were caught and hanged. They were brothers and became known to history as the Chaphekar Brothers.

The Government suspected that Tilak was behind the outrage. He was arrested, tried for sedition and put behind bars. In jail he was treated as an ordinary convict. It was only on the insistence of European scholars that Tilak was set free.

This was by no means all. The editors of all newspapers which supported the agitation were arrested and their properties were confiscated.

All this created a great deal of resentment among the people. Whatever respect the British had commanded was being gradually eroded.

At this time world events took a turn which greatly inspired Indians. In 1893 Italy invaded Abyssinia. Abyssinia was a poor and backward country whose arms were outdated. Italy, on the other hand, was a modern nation with a well-organised, trained army equipped with the latest weapons. Yet the invaders were routed. Italy's defeat greatly impressed people everywhere. The myth of the invincibility of the West was exploded. Then in 1904 Japan, a small Asian country, challenged and subdued the might of immense Czarist Russia. This latter event particularly had a great impact on Asia. It imbued self-confidence in the enslaved Asian populations. Surely, if a tiny country like Japan could teach a lesson to the Czarist Empire, India, a vast nation, could at least free herself from the domination of Britain.

Elsewhere too in Egypt, Persia, Turkey and Russia, national and popular movements were gaining ground.

This further boosted the morale of freedom fighters in India who had been smarting under the

treatment they were receiving at the hands of the British. The European attitude of racial superiority had been dealt a severe blow and Indians now not only felt a growing pride in their culture and heritage but realised that given the will, they had the strength to win their freedom.



PARTITION OF BENGAL

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While the nation was stricken and distressed by famine, the plague and earthquake, the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, passed a resolution which was the last straw that broke the camel's back. He had already passed many unpopular laws and caused a great deal of hostility by his frequent contemptuous references to Indians but this particular measure made the people rise in open revolt.

Lord Curzon decided to partition Bengal into two. The scheme was to merge the eastern districts of Dacca, Rajshahi and Chittagong with Assam, thereby forming a new province which was to be called East Bengal and Assam. The rest of Bengal was to be joined to Orissa and the province thus brought into being was to be called Bengal.

Why did the British decide to partition Bengal? They claimed that it would facilitate administration. But Indians believed that British intentions were more sinister. The British Government wanted to crush the



upsurge of nationalism. They wanted to set Hindus against Muslims and disunite the country. They were playing the game of 'divide and rule' very skilfully. Indeed British officials fostered the idea 'that the Muslims in unpartitioned Bengal suffered disabilities

because they were in a minority. Therefore, they declared, the partition was to the advantage of the Muslims who would be in a majority in the new province of East Bengal and Assam.

The Congress learnt of the British Government's intentions. But it believed that the Government would never violate popular sentiment by taking such a step. By now two distinct wings had emerged in the Congress: the Moderates led by Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and the Extremists led by Lokamanya Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. The two groups united to oppose the partition of Bengal.

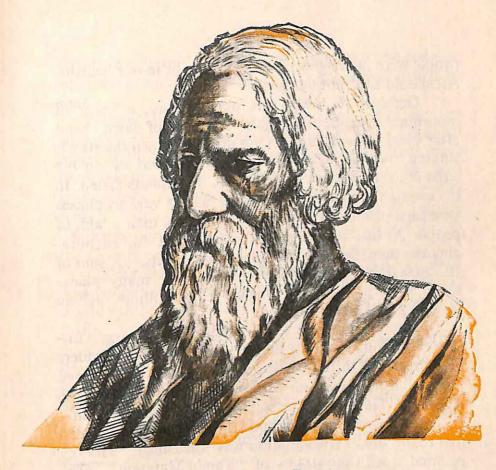
They decided to boycott British goods. Krishna



BIPIN CHANDRA PAL

Kumar Mitra, a popular leader of Bengal, said, "Let us all, in the name of the motherland and for her good, take a pledge that whatever the inconvenience, when swadeshi goods are available, we shall never buy foreign goods."

The Government, however, did not budge. It announ-



RABINDRANATH TAGORE

ced the partition of Bengal on October 16, 1905. Rabindranath Tagore in an appeal to the people said, "The Government is determined to divide us. But our hearts can never be severed. Let us tie rakhis on October 16, for rakhi is the symbol of unity." And the

people were instructed, "Let no fire be lit in our hearths.
All should fast on that day."

October 16, 1905 was observed as a day of mourning throughout Bengal. At break of dawn, band after band of men and women marched down the streets singing "Vande Mataram". They tied rakhis on the wrist of everyone they came across. Thousands fasted. In the evening protest meetings were held at various places. One such meeting was attended by no less than a lakh of people. At this meeting a fund was started for encouraging the manufacture of indigenous goods. A sum of Rs. 50,000 was collected on the spot. At many places there were bonfires of foreign cloth. Shops selling foreign goods were picketed.

The Government was beside itself with rage. Lt.-Governor Fuller of East Bengal summoned the leaders and threatened them with dire consequences. He warned them that he would use Gurkha troops to put down the agitation. He banned the singing of "Vande Mataram".

But these threats had no effect. They only added fuel to the fire. The agitation was intensified. The sky resounded with the strains of "Vande Mataram". The Government resorted to lathis, bullets, caning—but to no avail. The song of freedom would not be silenced.

A conference was held at Barisal. The police summoned the conveners and forbade them to sing "Vande Mataram" at the conference. The conveners agreed. But when the delegates to the conference came to hear about this, they were very angry. They refused

to abide by this cowardly agreement and insisted that whatever the consequences, "Vande Mataram" would be

sung.

They did sing "Vande Mataram". But as they advanced towards the stage singing, they were cornered by the police. Lathis rained on their heads. This made them sing louder still. Surendranath Banerjee was taken into custody. He paid a fine but returned to the conference. The conference was unanimous in its strong condemnation of the repressive policies and brutality of the Government.

The following day the conference could not be held. The police wanted an assurance that "Vande Mataram" would not be sung but the delegates refused to guarantee

this.

The movement for freedom gained momentum. The problem of the partition of Bengal was no longer a local problem. It now concerned the whole of India. The boycott of British goods became the rallying-point of opposition. Even young children were infused with this spirit. College students refused to write on British paper.

People began to shun everything Western even education. The Bang Jatiya Vidya Parishad was established. It raised a lakh of rupees and opened schools and colleges. In East Bengal alone more than 24 schools were started Along with national education, the swadeshi movement too progressed rapidly. The

handloom industry came into its own again.

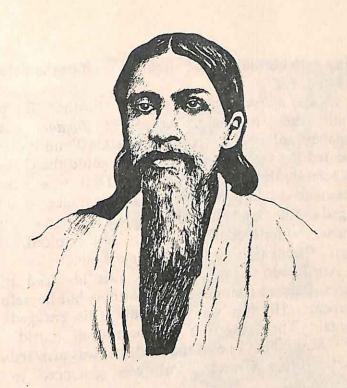
RISE OF THE TERRORIST MOVEMENT

The partition of Bengal had caused widespread popular resentment but this had had little effect on the Government. Nine well-known leaders had been exiled and those actively engaged in the agitation were dealt with severely.

Popular agitation was proving ineffective. Passive opposition and boycott had made no impression on the British rulers. Perhaps force would have more impact. Force would encounter force. This sentiment gained ground among the youth.

Soon training centres sprang up all over Bengal. Here political discussions were held and young people were trained in the use of firearms. The young patriots were prepared to sacrifice their lives for India's freedom.

Newspapers played an important role in spreading political consciousness. In Bengal there were three such newspapers: the Vande Mataram, the Sandhya and the Jugantar. Among the editors of the Vande Mataram was the famous Bipin Chandra Pal. Aurobindo Ghosh,



AUROBINDO GHOSH

who was well-known for his revolutionary activities at the time, was among its leading contributors. He was a strong advocate of violent revolution. His writings emphasised the need for force. He insisted that nothing could be gained by begging and pleading. In a letter to his wife, he wrote, "Other people look upon India as only consisting of fields, meadows, forests, hills and rivers. But I look upon her as a mother. What would be a son's duty if someone threatened his mother's life? Should he, unconcerned, continue eating his meal or

playing with his child? Or should he run to the defence of his mother?"

Swami Vivekanand's younger brother Bhupen-dranath Dutt was the editor of the *Jugantar*. This newspaper had a readership of over 50,000 and it openly advocated the use of violence. How could the Government tolerate this? Bhupendranath Dutt was arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. When his aged mother was given the news of her son's imprisonment, she did not shed a tear. She rejoiced. The women of Bengal came to congratulate her.

Aurobindo too was arrested. At his trial Bipin Chandra Pal was summoned as a witness but he refused to appear. He too was arrested. This enraged the students. They staged a demonstration outside the court. Sushil Sen; one of the students, was arrested and flogged. Bipin Chandra Pal was sentenced to six months in jail.

Throughout the country public meetings were banned. Since open opposition was not permitted, political activity went underground. People were so fed up with the brutality of the Government that they were determined to do or die.

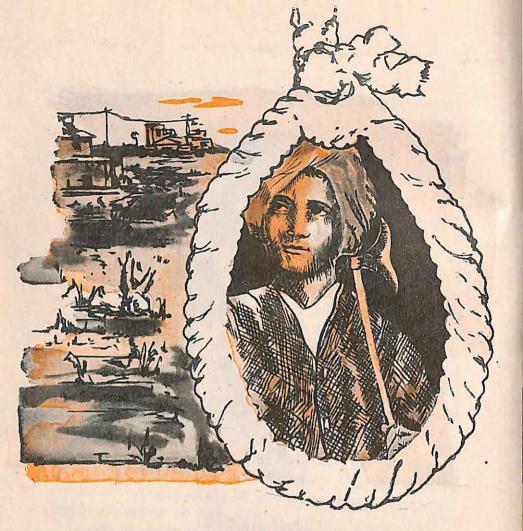
Many attempts, some successful, others unsuccessful, were made on the lives of British officials. On April 30, 1908, two young boys, Profulla Chaki and Khudi Ram Bose, fired at a British officer. He escaped injury, but two Englishwomen—a mother and daughter—were killed by mistake. Profulla committed suicide.



PROFULLA CHAKI

Khudi Ram Bose was arrested and hanged. He was only 15 years old. The country shuddered at the martyrdom imposed on one so young.

Sometime later the police unearthed a bomb factory at Manaktala in Calcutta. Thirty-four people were arrested and tried, including Aurobindo. The trial was



KHUDI RAM BOSE

popularly known as the Alipur Conspiracy Case. Aurobindo was defended by Chittaranjan Das, who not only refused to charge any fee, but even sold his horse-carriage to finance the case.



The terrorist movement spread from Bengal and enveloped the rest of the country. The Punjab too came under its sway and events strengthened its hold. A British journalist shot his servant. He was tried but the jury refused to convict him and he was acquitted. This was not an isolated case. Newspapers in the Punjab were outspoken in their strong condemnation of these incidents.

Lala Lajpat Rai was then the most popular leader of the Punjab. Together with Tilak and Bipin Chandra

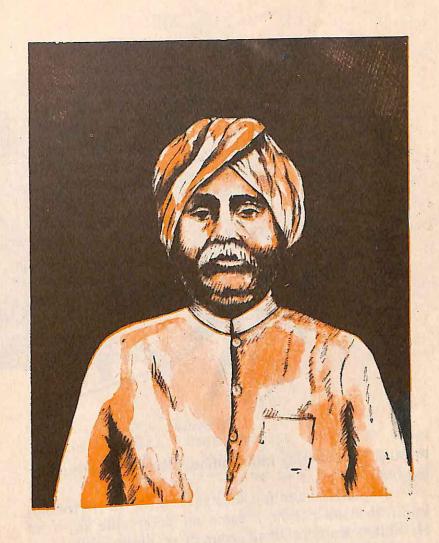
Pal, Lajpat Rai took a prominent part in advocating revolution as opposed to moderation and caution when dealing with the Government. He toured the province to rally support against the British. A number of young men joined him. Among them was Sardar Ajit Singh, the uncle of the famous revolutionary, Bhagat Singh. The British Government disapproved of his activities, so on May 14, 1907 Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were arrested and exiled to Mandalay.

This enraged the people of the Punjab. 'Quit India foreigners,' 'Go away, you double-faced, dual-standard people.' Such slogans echoed down the streets and the following song became as popular in the Punjab as

"Vande Mataram" was in Bengal.

"Protect your honour, O Jat! The whites have robbed you! We will never be defeated, No achievement results from talking, Rise and find a solution! You are losing your claim! Look at Bengal !"

Tilak was the outstanding leader of Maharashtra. In his paper the Kesari, he propagated militant nationalism but he was not a supporter of terrorist methods. In spite of this he was arrested and sentenced to six years' exile and fined a thousand rupees. The judge asked him if he wished to make a statement. He replied, "In spite of the jury's verdict I declare that I am not guilty. There is a supreme power that governs the



LALA LAJPAT RAI

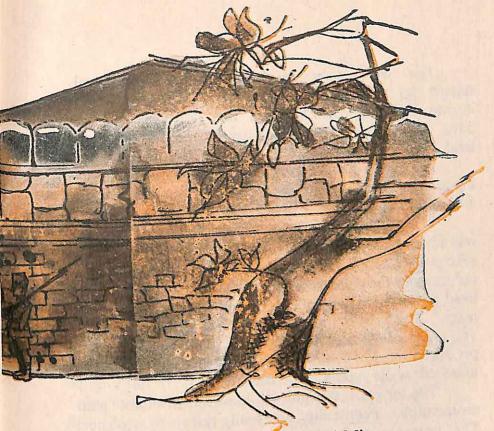
affairs of the universe. Maybe it is the will of God that the cause that is so dear to me shall prosper better



through my suffering imprisonment than by my remaining free."

Repression and injustice gave birth to terrorism. Political assassination became an acceptable form of retaliation among a small group of revolutionaries.

Ganesh Damodar Savarkar was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans for merely publishing a book of poems. Six months later when the magistrate who had sentenced him was leaving for England, he was shot dead. An attempt was also



made on the life of the Viceroy, Lord Minto.

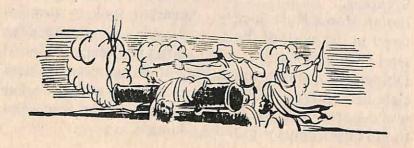
Soon Indian terrorist groups spread to other countries. In England, Shyamji Krishna Verma took up the work. He was later joined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Shyamji Krishna Verma established the Indian Home Rule Society. Savarkar took a keen interest in the work of the Society and also arranged to send arms secretly to revolutionaries in India. Madanlal Dhingra who shot William Curzon Wiley was an associate of Savarkar. Dhingra was hanged and Savarkar was deported to India where he was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans.

The well-known revolutionary Lala Hardayal started the movement in America. He was arrested during the First World War but was later released on bail. Soon afterwards, he quietly escaped to Switzerland.

All these revolutionaries were brave, self-sacrificing and patriotic and in their hearts even the British admired them.

When Kanailal, a famous revolutionary of Bengal, was hanged, his relatives and friends went to the jail to take possession of the body. A British official conducted them to the cell where the body lay, covered from head to foot with a blanket. Seeing it, they burst into tears. The British official comforted them, "Why do you cry? He died a martyr's death. The country that produced him is blessed. We must all die but how many of us die such a noble death?"

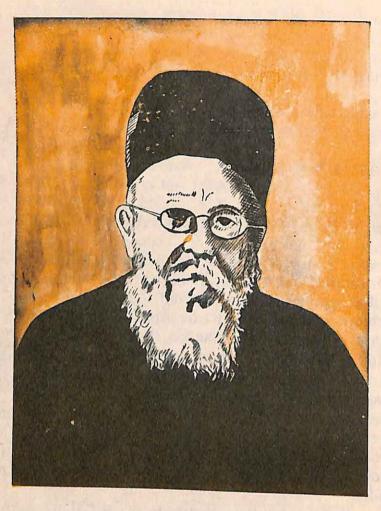
The terrorist movement, however, did not gain momentum. People did not easily resort to violence. The peasants and labourers were untouched by the movement. The terrorist leaders were able to sow the seeds of freedom, but were unable to make them bear fruit.



THE CONGRESS TAKES A NEW TURN

Two wings had formed in the Congress: the Moderates and the Extremists. Both wings wanted self-government but they differed on the means to achieve this aim. The Extremists wanted to launch a mass campaign to pressurise the Government. The Moderates, however, advocated moderation and constitutional measures. The partition of Bengal brought the two wings together and they combined to oppose it. Gokhale, the leader of the Moderates, was at this time the President of the Congress. It was decided that Gokhale should go to England and persuade the British Government to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards India.

Gokhale's visit to England was a failure. After this the Moderates lost ground and people were drawn towards the Extremists. The rift between the two wings widened and in the Congress session of 1906 held in Calcutta, it was with difficulty that Dadabhai Naoroji, the President, was able to prevent a split. It was here



DADABHAI NAOROJI

that the word swarajya was first coined by Dadabhai who added, "Launch a campaign, but launch a vigorous

campaign. See that the campaign remains peaceful and does not become disorderly."

By the next session, the Extremist wing had gained further ground. The policy of boycotting Government jobs, institutions and organizations was favoured. Then there arose a controversy over the presidentship. When Lala Lajpat Rai refused to accept the position, the Moderates declared Dr. Ras Behari Ghosh President. The Extremists refused to recognise him. Soon there was an uproar at the gathering. A hobnailed red shoe was hurled at Surendranath Banerjee. It grazed his cheek and landed on Pherozeshah Mehta. Utter chaos ensued. But Lokamanya Tilak stood his ground and when people advanced towards him brandishing sticks, his greatest political opponent, Gokhale, stood in front of him like a wall and shielded him.



The split between the two wings became irreparable. This was a heaven-sent opportunity for the Government. It gave it a chance to weaken the national movement. The British Government made a move to win over the Moderates and announced that it would introduce constitutional reforms. So in the name of giving increased participation to Indians in the Government, the Morley-Minto Reforms were introduced.

What exactly were the Morley-Minto Reforms? The reforms conceded that at least one Indian should be included in the Viceroy's Executive Council. The principle of democratic election with certain reservations was accepted. Indian membership of the Legislative Assemblies was increased. But the elected members would still be in a minority. The members were given no power. They had only the right to raise motions during the budget session and to advise and criticise.

The Act also set a very damaging precedent. It recognised the principle of communal representation. Electoral colleges were reorganized and special seats were reserved for Muslims. Among the Hindus, only those who were able to pay a land revenue of Rs. 7000 or more had the right to vote in the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. But for the Muslims, the minimum requirement was only Rs. 750.

What did the Indians gain from these reforms? They only alienated Hindus and Muslims. They encouraged Muslims to consider themselves a separate people with separate interests and caused disunity. This

The Government was aware that until the idea of partitioning Bengal was not dropped, there would be no peace in the country. This could easily be done using King George V's coronation as a pretext. This way the British would not lose face.

The durbar was held with great pomp and splendour. All the Indian princes, senior officials and landed gentry were present. Two important royal proclamations were made at the durbar. India's capital would be shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, and the partition of Bengal would be annulled. Bengal would be made a separate province with a governor of its own.

This was a good move to appease the angry Indians. Congress leaders, however, cautioned their countrymen not to be deceived by minor concessions. spoke against the go-slow policy in the advance towards

freedom

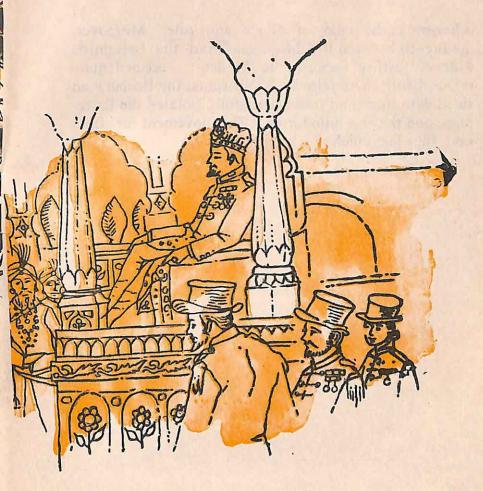
The Delhi durbar marks a turning-point in India's march towards freedom. The injustice that was done by the partition of Bengal was remedied. Indians became aware of their strength. But much still remained to be done, many battles had still to be fought before freedom could be ours.





DELHI DURBAR AND ANNULMENT OF THE BENGAL PARTITION

Towards the end of 1910, Lord Hardinge became Viceroy of India. Europe at this time was in a turmoil.



A world war seemed imminent. The British wanted to adopt a policy whereby they could depend upon Indians for support. The Viceroy, therefore, announced the holding of a *durbar* in Delhi the following year. King George V and Queen Mary were expected to be present.

is known as the policy of divide and rule. Moreover, the breach between the Moderates and the Extremists widened further because the Moderates seemed quite satisfied with these reforms. This suited the British who sided with them and thus successfully isolated the Extremists and the revolutionaries. The movement for freedom thus lost much of its impetus.





